

Amendments to the Claims

Claims 1-15 (Canceled)

16. (New) A two-part carton comprising an open top container and a top closure connected to said open top container, said open top container and said top closure formed from separate blanks respectively, said open top container including a series of wall panels, said open top container is reinforced by a series of integral reinforcing panels hinged respectively to said wall panels along an upper periphery of said open top container, each reinforcing panel is disposed in overlapping relationships with a respective one of said wall panels, and each reinforcing panel is hingedly connected to at least an adjacent one of said reinforcing panels.

17. (New) The carton according to claim 16 wherein said top closure is disposed at an elevation below said upper periphery of said open top container.

18. (New) The carton according to claim 16 wherein said top closure is disposed at an elevation substantially equal to the elevation of a lower extremity of said reinforcing panels.

19. (New) The carton according to claim 17 wherein said open top container comprises at least one reinforced handle aperture struck from at least one of said reinforcing panels, and wherein said at least one handle aperture is located at an elevation above said top closure.

20. (New) The carton according to claim 16 wherein said top closure comprises apertures for receiving articles, and wherein each of said apertures has a frangible connection with at least another one of said apertures to facilitate removal of said articles.

21. (New) The carton according to claim 20 wherein upon removal of said articles, the carton retains sufficient structural integrity such that the carton can be re-used for returning empty articles.

22. (New) The carton according to claim 16 wherein said reinforcing panels are hingedly connected to the open top container entirely along said upper periphery of said open top container.

23.. (New) The carton according to claim 16 wherein at least one of said reinforcing panels is hingedly connected at opposed side edges of said at least one reinforcing panel to adjacent ones of said reinforcing panels respectively.

24. (New) The carton according to claim 19 wherein said top closure comprises at least one end flap hingedly connected thereto, and said at least one end flap is folded downward to lie in a plane of said at least one reinforcing panel to avoid covering said at least one handle aperture.

25. (New) The carton according to claim 16 wherein a hinged connection between at least one of said reinforcing panels and an adjacent reinforcing panel comprises a portion which partially separates said one and adjacent reinforcing panels to facilitate folding of said one and adjacent reinforcing panels.

26. (New) The carton according to claim 16 wherein said top closure comprises a main panel and a plurality of flaps hingedly connected to said main panel along a periphery of said main panel, and wherein a first pair of oppositely disposed ones of said flaps are folded upwardly from said main panel and a second pair of oppositely disposed ones of said flaps adjacent to said first pair are folded downwardly of said main panel.

27. (New) A two-part blank for forming a carton comprising, a first part comprising a series of wall panels for forming an open top container and a second part separate from said first part for forming a top closure, said open top container, when erected from said first part, is reinforced by a series of integral reinforcing panels hinged respectively to said wall panels along an upper periphery of said first part, wherein each of said reinforcing panels is disposed in overlapping relationships with a respective one of said wall panels when the carton is erected, and wherein said each reinforcing panel is hinged to at least an adjacent one of said reinforcing panels.

28. (New) The blank according to claim 27 wherein said second part comprises apertures for receiving articles, and wherein each of said apertures has a frangible connection with at least another one of said apertures to facilitate removal of the articles.

29. (New) The blank according to claim 27 wherein said first part comprises at least one reinforced handle aperture struck from at least one of said reinforcing panels.